THE LABOUR MONTHLY

A MAGAZINE OF INTERNATIONAL LABOUR

Editor: R. PALME DUTT

Volume 6 December, 1924 Number 12

PRINCIPAL CONTENTS

Notes of the Month

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By HENRI BARBUSSE

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CONTENTS

Notes of the Month - - - - - Page 707
TOWARDS CIVIL WAR

Anatole France and the Revolutionary Idea - „ 720
By HENRI BARBUSSE

The Stability of Capitalism, or the Unstable Communists - - - - - - „ 725
By KARL RADEK

On the Road to Insurrection—III - - „ 732
By V. I. LENIN

Reconstructing Europe - - - - - „ 740
By MANABENDRA NATH ROY

The World of Labour - - - - - - „ 752
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NOTES of the MONTH

Class Politics—Exit the Tiger Tamer—The Ass's Kick—Religious Consolations—A Tell-tale Minister—Prolonging Capitalism—Burying the Past—Labour in "Opposition"?—Counter-Revolutionaries Still—Where is the Left?—Gentlemen All—"Liberalising Labour"—What is "Independent Working-class Politics"?—Communism

> Had that Labour Government been allowed to proceed, it would have produced a greater amount of content among the toiling multitude and it would have established capitalism longer than it is likely to exist now.—JOHN WHEATLEY at Glasgow "Victory Rally." *The Times*, November 3, 1924 (omitted in *Daily Herald* report).

CLASS politics are now established in Britain in the most open form. A compact bourgeois Government of counter-revolution, established on the single formula of uniting all bourgeois forces against the working class, faces a working class angry and indignant at the sense of being "tricked" by the mockeries of a democratic system which allows the bourgeois machine to sweep an election by its unchecked control and produce an overwhelming Conservative majority on a minority vote. Both sides know they are enemies; both sides know that the struggle is not ended by the artificial parliamentary majority. A heavy capitalist offensive threatens the workers; big conflicts loom ahead, at home, in the colonies and in Europe. The class issue has overpowered every other issue, and reduced the official Labour Party leaders, who lived on its denial, to stammering incoherence. Never before have the "two nations" been so clearly marked out. The fig-leaf of "national unity" has been torn to shreds. The Union Jack and the Red Flag confront one another as the symbols of opposing armies.

THE golden palace of dreams, which MacDonald held before the workers, of "conciliation" and a "new "spirit," has vanished into thin air with a turn of the wand. The bourgeois tiger has not forgotten its claws under the eloquence of a MacDonald. So long as that eloquence served the

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purpose of charming the prey into quiet submission, MacDonald was allowed to play his little rôle amidst contemptuous tolerance, and strut with pride as the invincible tiger-tamer—"all done by kindness." But so soon as the workers began to stir, out came the claws, and—exit MacDonald. He was revealed as not quite such a hero, when it came to a fight with the tiger; and the election experience displayed a picture which the working-class movement will not remember with pleasure. A flood of light on the meaning of it all began to break in. It became clear that all his "ideals" had only smoothed the way for the bourgeoisie—here to put the noose on the necks of the German workers and prepare the capitalist offensive in England, there to sanctify repression and terror in India, there to divide the Russian and British workers, there to split the working-class movement at home. When he had served his purpose he was thrown aside like a used-up rag, just as Henderson was thrown aside, just as every instrument of capitalism is thrown aside when its immediate utility is passed—until next time. The workers may now count their gains from the "civilised" methods of advance advocated for them by MacDonald without any of the unpleasantness of the class struggle. The MacDonald Labour Government, which was hailed by all the supporters of the Second International as a "bloodless revolution" and the opening of a new period for the working class, has ended in—and actually smoothed the way for—the strongest and most open Government of bourgeois class dictatorship in modern British history.

"THE living ass will kick the dying lion." After MacDonald is down, all those who had nothing but praise and servility while he was up, and suppressed all criticism while criticism would have needed courage and been of value, hasten to impart their little kick. "The chief fault of the Ministry," declared the *Daily Herald* within a few days of its decease, "was a tendency to be more official than the politicians of the old parties, and an anxiety on the part of a good many to prove that a Labour Government was no different from any other. That was certainly a mistake." True, O sage. But why not have pointed it out when it would have been of some use and when the

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Communist Party was alone in holding up the working-class banner? The *New Leader* is even more downright. "Our period of office," it declares, "ends with moral breakdown in two directions. Our Government has prepared the way for Tory coercion in India and for a Tory quarrel with Russia." And after a passing reference to the Secret Service, "for whose existence there is no excuse in time of peace" (the *Daily Herald* also ostentatiously denounces the Secret Service *after* the Labour Government, which protected it against the Communist attack, is gone: "I doubt if Ministers have been allowed to know one-tenth of the truth about its organisation and its activities"—no doubt; but in that case why not have had the kindness to enlighten them while they were still Ministers?), the I.L.P. organ goes on to declare:—

> It was no part of our strategy for winning power to court the confidence of the midde class by seeming to be as sound Imperialists as Liberals and Tories are. The sudden revelation of an ugly and costly blunder has lit up the road for us and shown us our peril. *With or without leaders*, untrammelled by *a record which we disavow*, let us renounce tactics and struggle to be ourselves.

Brave words—*if they had been spoken six months ago.* But now, when the milk is spilt, the writer must excuse us if we inquire a little more closely into what he has to offer *for the present period*, before we let him lead us astray again.

EVEN the Chairman of the I.L.P. contributes his share, although thickly clothed with apologetic considerateness for "the leaders whom I love." "I cannot believe the leaders whom I love will misunderstand me" (they will not); but he does feel that "we wriggled a little over unemployment," that the electoral tactics have produced "a slight setback morally," that it was a mistake to talk "electoral nonsense about ex-soldiers with no feet," that "we" revealed "a capitalist attitude to power and freedom" and an "orthodox attitude to power in India, and the East," and that "if Labour should ever fail as a Government, it will be in accordance with the degree to which it succumbs to the love of power." In fact, let the dog return to his vomit; the soulful idealists cannot safely return to their spiritual spotlessness, leaving behind their little bout of imperialist realpolitik ("as

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sound imperialists as Liberals and Tories are "), with its unpleasant memories of air-bombing, gunboats to China, &c., concealed under a veil of pained disapproval ("Succumbed to the love of power," my dear), and wallow once again in the purity of their souls—until the next bout, when the longed-for moment comes of receiving once again the rudder of the British Empire, spiritual idealism goes back into cold storage, and action at the head of the capitalist State inevitably follows precisely the same lines as before. Truly, of all the poisons which capitalism employs to enslave the working class, the most besotting (especially for the English working class, long soaked in the traditions of bourgeois religion in its most hypocritical and canting form) is the cheap, spurious "idealism" which canalises off all the healthy natural disgust with capitalist imperialism into pious "ideal" channels, and refuses to make any actual break with capitalist imperialism. Compared with this, the brute jingoism of the sensation Press is a foe easy to overcome.

BUT indeed even the ex-Ministers themselves begin to come out with more or less open repudiations of the Labour Ministry. Mr. Wheatley draws as a moral from the election that "a timid 'statesmanlike' attitude makes no appeal to a people struggling to emancipate itself from poverty." This admission is certainly in very striking contrast to the official Labour propaganda that identification with Communism had frightened off the naturally conservative masses. Perhaps it is even in contrast to Mr. Wheatley's own Election Address that "Labour's nine months of office must rank among the greatest events in Britain. For the first time men drawn from the ranks of the common people have been entrusted with the administration of great Departments of State and the destinies of the Empire, and it is generally admitted they have been a complete success." But on another occasion Mr. Wheatley made an even more definite statement, of which it is doubtful whether he himself realised the full force, or it would have led him to a very different conclusion. He said:—

> Capitalism in its very nature is too selfish to make sacrifices of even an infinitesimal character in order to preserve its existence. Had

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> that Labour Government been allowed to proceed, it would have produced a greater amount of content among the toiling multitude, and it would have established capitalism longer than it is likely to exist now.

That sentence deserves to stand as the epitaph of the Labour Government. It is to be hoped that every reader of THE LABOUR MONTHLY will study it carefully and think out all that it implies and the conclusions to which it leads.

WHAT does it mean? For nine months the Labour Government was proclaimed to the workers by the whole official Labour propaganda as the leader of the advance against capitalism towards Socialism. The Communists were absolutely alone (not a single representative leader dared associate himself in public with their position) in denying this and warning the working class of the danger of this illusion. And now, when it is all over, a leading Labour Cabinet Minister comes forward and declares that the Communist criticism was correct. For in what did the Communist criticism consist? Was there anything worse said of the Labour Government by the Communists than what is here said by one of its own members? The Communist criticism consisted in this, that they declared the Labour Government of MacDonald to be in fact an instrument of capitalism; not an instrument of the working class against capitalism for lessening its power and shortening its life, but an instrument of capitalism against the working class, for strengthening the power of capitalism and prolonging its life. And what does Mr. Wheatley say? He says that "had the Labour Government been allowed to proceed . . . it would have established capitalism longer." But for what purpose does he say it? Does he say it in criticism of the Labour Government? Does he draw the conclusion that the policy of the Labour Government was a mistake, since it is presumably not the object of the working class to prolong the life of capitalism, and that it is therefore necessary to revise the whole policy? Does he find it necessary to revise his own position, or withdraw any of his own expressions ("greatest events in Britain . . . destinies of the Empire . . . complete success")? Nothing of the kind. He is simply making one of the usual Labour Ministry's appeals

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to the bourgeoisie, to show what faithful servants they really were and how short-sighted and ungrateful it was to turn them out. And this from the principal representative of the "Left" in the Labour Ministry. Could there be a clearer revelation of how tremendous a change is needed if there is to be a real new leadership of the working class in Britain?

I.L.P. readers will remember an experience that was familiar to them after the war. During the war the I.L.P. spent its main energies in combating the orthodox view of the diplomatic origins of the war, and in face of its recital of very plain facts, found itself met with boycott and disapproval in all "respectable" quarters of the bourgeoisie and the Labour Party. After the war these same facts suddenly began to be admitted on all sides in the most casual and careless manner. Not only Henderson, Clynes, &c., suddenly became "converted" about the war, when it was necessary to be in Opposition—so that to-day the official Labour organ can declare that the masses were "humbugged" into the war (by whom?). But also Austen Chamberlain, Foreign Secretary, can declare that, had the Foreign Office declared its secret commitments to France and Russia, there would have been no war; and Lloyd George, the fervid denouncer of the "cold and calculated conspiracy," could declare that the nations "stumbled" into war. But somehow these "admissions" were empty of any value or significance. The same old imperialist policy was carried on by Lloyd George and Chamberlain (and, for that matter, by Henderson and Clynes). The "admissions" could easily be made, because the issue was a past one. And what matters is the present policy: the correct understanding of the past is only important as a means to correct action in the present. As the facts of the past become clearer, it is necessary to weave a picture round them in order to conceal the fact that the present policy is the same. "We were not correctly informed at the time of all the facts." Such is the stale old plea, the refuge of Henderson, Clynes and the official Labour Party, if pressed on their policy in the war; concealing the fact that they were simply pursuing the same policy as now, of running after the heels of bourgeois foreign policy, and did not want to know the facts. The same process is

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now taking place with regard to the Labour Government. A picture is being woven. Some Ministers "succumbed to temptation" (and which of us, as Mr. Hamilton Fyfe would hasten to say, can be sure that we might not also succumb in their place?) Even a little dirt is to be allowed to stick to MacDonald. And so the whole tremendous significance of the Labour Government for the working class is covered up, and the fact is concealed that the Labour Party is pursuing precisely the same policy to-day in a yet more dangerous form as a "loyal Opposition," and leading the working class to precisely the same conclusion.

FOR what is the policy of the Labour Party to-day? The policy of the Labour Party to-day is to await as a loyal constitutional Opposition in Parliament the turn of the parliamentary wheel in five years' time to bring office and an independent majority. What does this mean in practice? The Baldwin Government is based on an absolute parliamentary majority. This means that for four years the bourgeoisie can "constitutionally" do what it likes to the working class, at home and abroad, against the Soviet Union, against the masses in India, against the German workers, against the Communist Party and the trade unions, and the Labour Party must loyally accept every measure, once passed, and actually help to *impose* it on the working class by counselling the workers to accept quietly, and by actively opposing and combating any attempt at working-class resistance. Thus the rôle of the Labour Party in the present period becomes to act as the agent and adjutant of the Baldwin-Curzon-Churchill Government. Fascism in practice has only to take on the robes of the magic "constitution" in name to become the accepted of the Labour Party. Had the British bourgeoisie chosen to spend their money like the Italian on an inflammatory national campaign, hired bands and a march on Rome, the resulting Government would have been "undemocratic." But because the British bourgeoisie spent their money instead on the safer and relatively cheaper devices of an inflammatory national campaign through their already existing poison Press, and a few electoral stunts and fireworks (very inexpensively produced through the State-paid bureaucratic apparatus), the resulting Government

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of exactly the same colour is "democratic." As always, whenever the automatic bourgeois result comes out of the bourgeois democratic voting machine, and the poor hopeful Social Democrat has lost another penny, there is always some "special circumstance" to explain it to him and to maintain his hopes. It is always an "accident," or "foul play," or the "power of the Press," or "money and motor cars," or "the wickedness of Mr. Lloyd George," or "war fever," or "the inequalities of the electoral system," or "plots and conspiracies" and all the rest of it: but never what it is—the normal working of the machine of bourgeois dictatorship through the hypocritical forms of bourgeois democracy.

JUST as the Labour Government was forced, whatever the personal feelings of its members—pacifists, idealists, Quakers, Catholics, Baptists, Freemasons and Higher Ethicists—because they were not ready to base themselves on the working class, that is, to be a revolutionary Government, therefore they were forced to base themselves on the bourgeoisie, there being no between-policy, and carry out the dirtiest imperialist, militarist and secret police functions for the bourgeoisie; just as the Labour leaders in the election were driven by the skilful bourgeois campaign ("either for us or against us," "either Bolsheviks or Counter-Revolutionaries") to divorce themselves from the workers and proclaim only their devotion to the bourgeoisie, drive out the revolutionary workers, proclaim themselves as the strongest bulwark against a Socialist revolution, provide by their own corruption the dirtiest arguments to the bourgeoisie against the working class, link up openly with the Counter-Revolution, and in every way disorganise and confuse the working-class front in the electoral fight far more effectively than the bourgeoisie could have done directly—a situation only receiving its final and symbolic illustration in the episode of the Zinoviev forgery, revealing the Counter-Revolutionary United Front of MacDonald and the White Guards in the very crisis of the electoral struggle and reducing even his own colleagues and Ministers to contradiction and confusion—just in precisely the same way, and for the same reasons, namely, that they refuse to recognise the class struggle of the workers and are therefore compelled to line up with the

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bourgeoisie, the rôle of the Labour Party lead in the present period becomes to act as go-betweens for the Tory Baldwin Government with the working class, and to sabotage the struggle of the working class against the new capitalist offensive. So the hue and cry after the election is raised, not against the Tory Government, but against the Communist Party. So MacDonald hastens to declare in his first public utterance that "they would serve the nation in Opposition as they served it as a Government." So Thomas goes back to the Secretaryship of the Railwaymen, openly proclaiming his purpose to "render most service to my country" in that capacity in the troubleous times ahead—*i.e.*, to sabotage the struggle of the working class.

NOR is the voice of opposition allowed to be heard. In all the utterances of leading Labour representatives after the election there is not yet to be found a trace of a constructive working-class lead for the period of terrible struggle in front. There may be criticism of the Labour Government for its weaknesses: but it is not yet criticism that leads to any result for the present. The hypnotic attraction of "next time" in four years engrosses the minds of all, following the well-worn parliamentary groove laid down for them by the bourgeoisie. The bourgeois parliamentary poison has done its work well. The trade union leaders are silent, or repeat the phrases of the parliamentary leaders. The Left Wing proclaims the need of "more propaganda" (for whom? For Thomas and MacDonald?). Mr. Wheatley for the Left Wing declares that "Britain wants a new Blatchford" (forgive us for our sins), and that the Labour Party should cultivate a constructive imperial policy so as to take advantage of the strong existing imperial sentiment. Throughout there is not a trace of a suggestion of what four years of a Tory Government in the present international and economic position is going to mean for the working class in actual struggle (not just as "propaganda" for next time), and how the workers are going to meet it. The nearest approach to a militant spirit—let alone a militant policy—is to be found in such a characteristic utterance as that of Mr. Neil Maclean at the Glasgow "Victory Rally" of the I.L.P. Mr. Neil Maclean, after announcing his solemn conviction that there must

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have been a " traitor " high up in the Foreign Office (certainly—at the top), went on to pronounce the following terrible sentence as his verdict after the experience of the election:—

> They had hitherto treated their opponents as gentlemen. Now in the House they would treat them with contempt.

Alas for the British bourgeoisie, who must now indeed be beginning to tremble. But even this was too much for the tender feelings of Mr. MacDonald, who hastily took the next opportunity to announce that

> As an Opposition they would give the State, the people and the Commonwealth their fullest service. They would serve the nation in Opposition as they served it as a Government. . . . It will still be a fight of gentlemen.

" IT will still be a fight of gentlemen." Baldwin may drive to war with the Workers' Soviet Republic, equip and bribe and arm the satellite States against them, send guns and spies and assassins and saboteurs, as Churchill and Curzon have done before and are ready to do again. Never mind. *In Parliament it will still be a fight of gentlemen.* Baldwin may turn all the forces of terrorism against the helpless unarmed masses in India, suspending all law, shooting, imprisoning and bombing, repeating the horrors of Amritsar and the Black and Tans to crush the revolt of the people. *In Parliament it will still be a fight of gentlemen.* Baldwin may drive the whips of world finance upon the bare backs of the German workers, extracting tribute from starvation and hounding on the German Whites to their work of extermination and repression. *In Parliament it will still be a fight of gentlemen.* Baldwin may turn the offensive upon the British workers, using the engine of the law to suppress all militant agitation, backing and urging on the concerted employers' attack on hours and wages, goading on the workers to revolt and sporadic outbreaks in order to crush them, and bringing in the troops to shed the blood of starving workers. *In Parliament it will still be a fight of gentlemen.*

THIS is the meaning of the policy of " Liberalising the Labour Party " which is now the approved watchword of the bourgeoisie, proclaimed equally by Rothermere and MacDonald. This is the meaning of the " Independent majority "

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which is held out to the workers as the hypothetical carrot to induce them to submit quietly to be crushed by the Baldwin Government. MacDonald has perfectly clearly proclaimed his policy in all his speeches. Open coalition with the Liberal Party has been defeated by the pressure of the working-class rank and file, who, if they have been able to learn nothing else from the stupefying propaganda of the Labour Party, have at any rate learnt to regard the Liberal and Conservative Parties as poison. This defeat of a policy which MacDonald was himself in practice carrying out up to 1914, and for which influential forces in the Labour Party were working up to the last, was an undoubted victory for the working class; witness the open apprehension expressed in such Right Wing organs as the *New Statesman* and *Vorwärts*, who publicly warn MacDonald of the danger of eliminating the Liberal Party and the "disastrous" possibilities of class politics thus opened up. But MacDonald's calculation is different. MacDonald calculates to be able to appear to adapt himself in form to the working-class demand for separation from Liberalism, while carrying out the coalition with Liberalism in fact. The Labour Party definitely sets before itself the object to eliminate the Liberal Party. But its purpose in doing this is not to clear the stage for a direct confrontation of the working class and the bourgeoisie in politics: this is expressly denied. The purpose is to eliminate the Liberal Party in order to *replace* it by the Labour Party, which shall "inherit" (in MacDonald's own language) and carry on "the Liberal spirit" as a "united progressive party" with no class basis. "The Labour Party appeals to the Liberal spirit" (MacDonald at the dinner to himself). So here we are. We are to have again the old imperialist conglomeration "on no class basis" which swept to power in 1906 and deservedly went to wreck in 1914. The working class is painfully to demolish the Liberal Party in order to set it up again. This is to be the "independent majority" which is to be the dubious reward of the workers for quietly allowing the Baldwin Government to fasten down every rivet of capitalist preparation against future working-class attack, and suffering the complete disorganising and disruption of their own ranks in the name of the sacred "classless" democratic principle.

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A PLAIN question may be asked. What are "independent working-class politics"? It will be remembered that Keir Hardie and those with him founded the Independent Labour Party and the Labour Party on the basis of "independent working-class politics" in opposition to the "capitalist" parties. What did they mean by this? What is a "capitalist" party? What does "Workers, Unite" mean? Why did they found the Labour Party on the basis of the trade unions? Is all this class politics (however confused in expression) or is it not? Did they mean a certain ultimate theoretical difference about an abstraction called "Socialism" as the only difference from the Liberal Party (while completely accepting the "Liberal spirit"—Imperialism, &c.)? Or did they mean, what in every speech they proclaimed, and none more than Keir Hardie, that the workers had no place in the parties of the money-bags, and that the workers must found a party of their own. For if that is once admitted (and it is impossible to deny it, for every speech proclaims it), then the whole case of the Liberal democrats who try to repudiate any class basis for the Labour Party and make it a "united progressive party" is destroyed. It is they who are revealed as the intruders, offshoots from Liberalism endeavouring to destroy a whole generation of working-class effort, and to transform the Labour Party into a Liberal democratic, *i.e.*, a bourgeois party, thus defeating it in the hour of its success. The movement from a "class" basis to a "democratic" basis is a movement *back* to just that point from which the Labour Party started, and from which the early pioneers had painfully hewed out a way. That is why the transformation can only be accomplished by violent means—by disruption, by expulsions and ultimately by the break-up of the Labour Party—in the interests of Liberalism. MacDonald and his associates stand out as the would-be saviours of Liberalism in the face of the overwhelming working-class advance.

BUT Liberalism cannot be saved. That is the real meaning of the collapse of the MacDonald Labour Government. MacDonald can deny the class struggle in name; he cannot escape it in fact. Every strike shook the fragile fabric of the Labour Government, and raised questions which it could not

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answer, and which no loyal constitutional "Labour Government" can answer. Campbell and the Soviet Treaties were only the symbols of the class struggle which finally overwhelmed the Labour Government. The issues took a Communist form inevitably, not because of the malicious ingenuity of the Communists, but because Communism is the expression of the class struggle. The victory of Communism over the Labour Party is as inevitable as was the victory of the Labour Party over the Liberal Party—and for the same reason, that the class struggle cannot be escaped, and those who seek to deny it are doomed. Liberalism, or the denial, *i.e.*, the concealment, of the class struggle, can only flourish in the period of rising and prosperous capitalism, when there is still a surplus to distribute as "progress" and the working class are not yet awakened. That ended once and for all in 1914. In a period of world war and revolution, of economic decay and growing imperialist antagonism, of poverty and lowered standards, of sharpening class struggle and the use of every weapon against the workers, there is no room for Liberalism. The Liberalism that is attempting to revive itself in the Labour Party is only able to survive at all by taking on the mask of a class character; and the consequent contradiction is so increasingly patent at every turn of events as to reveal already the picture of its approaching breakdown. The choice before the workers is visibly no longer a choice between "progress" and "reaction." The choice before the workers is a choice between struggle and servitude. And the battle between those two alternatives is the battle between Communism and Liberalism in the working-class movement.

R. P. D.

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ANATOLE FRANCE AND THE REVOLUTIONARY IDEA[1]

By HENRI BARBUSSE

NOW that the great man has passed to the apotheosis of his glory and is for ever silent it is not enough just to speak of him; we must make him speak, quoting his characteristics and his views, until little by little the still shining reflection of his genius plays its part in current polemics. I did not want to take my part in these invocations where each one is too inclined to stress his own point of view on the authority of the magic voice that can no longer answer. I do it all the same, out of respect for the memory of the most illustrious of contemporary writers to whom I was personally attached by bonds of deep affection and great gratitude. On account of certain allegations and certain comments it seems to me at least desirable to bring things back to their right proportions by publicly giving my own individual testimony.

I refer above all to the exaggerated and immoral way in which our political opponents attempt to patronise, monopolise and interpret his personality in what concerns his attitude to Soviet Russia and the proletarian revolution.

Recently a well-known journalist, M. Jean-Bernard, in an article which was reproduced in several great French and foreign newspapers, said that it was thanks to my influence that France became one of the Clarté group and joined the Communist Movement. These are the points I would like to make clear.

I did not see France in '14, '15 and '16, for the reason that I passed that lapse of time in camp, in the trenches and in hospital. I even recollect, not without melancholy, that the man who first spoke about him and brought me his kind opinion of *Le Feu* was our admirable Raymond Lefèbre,[2] one day when he came to see me with Vaillant-Couturier at the military hospital of Chartres, in the beginning of 1917. At the end of that year, when my health

[1] Copyright.
[2] The French Communist who was drowned when returning from Russia in 1921.

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compelled me to stay in the south, I paid a visit to France at Antibes. I subsequently saw him at Paris, at St. Cloud and at Tours, and we had some important conversations. Moreover, I often communicated with him, between our interviews, through the medium of mutual friends.

I tried to convince him that the moment had come when the intellectuals had to choose between bourgeois ideology, whose bankruptcy was being revealed in every corner of the earth, between that and the cause of the labouring masses—a straight and narrow cause that allows of no compromise. I endeavoured to show him the great part which the exquisite critical insight of his works was driving him on to play in the conflict of social theories. I spent my time in making him see how fine it would be and how valuable to the cause of the emancipation of the masses if a man of his importance would resolutely stick to realist tactics—positive and practical—overcoming trepidations and rising above metaphysical abstractions, above the pretences and betrayals of the " democratic " creed—and even above the concessions to reformist sophistry which he had thought it his duty himself to make in the past. There was but one means to put right our poor upside-down civilisation's affaris, so cruelly involved and so incurably compromised: to begin everything over again on a proletarian basis, in accordance with the material laws of international economy and of "the common good," laws which had been broken or falsified hitherto by the successive apologists of the regime of privilege.

Let it be understood that I never pretended to deliver a course of lectures on history or social theory to the penetrating author of *L'Ile des Pingouins* and *Sur la Pierre Blanche*, nor to expound to him the evidence that the present world crisis finds us in a kind of supreme travail. My aim above all was to make him admit *that it is no longer enough to agree on principles*, that conviction must take on a positive, active, organic character and become part of that which is essential in the modern social struggle: the antagonism of the workers and the capitalists.

At that moment of his life of which I am speaking, Anatole France, I bear witness, understood the high logical—and moral—need for breaking the division which violently separates mere acceptance of a doctrine and its dialectical advancement from the

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methods of effective struggle having for object the substitution of one social and political situation for another.

He adhered to that revolutionary ideal, of which it might be said according to one's point of view that it constitutes either the loyal end, the highest form, or else the counterpart of the democratic ideal's lifeless algebraical dissertations around the terms justice, equality and international solidarity. He showed himself a convinced partisan of the Bolshevik revolution. He said to us, to Lefèbre and me, " I am more bolshevik than you " (and this often in the midst of a circle of listeners). For the rest he several times publicly bore witness to his approval of the proletarian cause ; in his expressions of support and his appeals, his unreserved sympathy not only for the rebellious ex-Service men of our International and for the International Workers' Relief, exclusively proletarian organs of struggle (I recently reminded him with feeling of the pit workers I found in Scotland and England), but also towards Soviet Russia and the Communist Party.

And yet, near as he then was to us, one felt that he was the prey of two tendencies, two urges : the one, entirely intellectual, the consequence of his superior clear-sightedness, led him naturally across the chaos of facts and the gross deviations of contemporary thought to extreme causes and results. The other came from a too long-standing literary habit of scepticism, of gentleness and of laughter and from a temperament which delighted in serene calm. His spirit was ahead of his character ; his spirit was bold and free ; but *he*, he was not. There was something tragic in seeing this eminent veteran, overwhelmed with talents and with glory, and endowed with such seductive charm, finding his sincerity and then struggling against it ; raising himself towards the light and then being afraid of it, like Dido of old. Alas, the character is heavier than the spirit.

I think, all the same, that Anatole France would have persisted, in spite of all, along the noble way on which he had at last embarked, if age had not definitely laid its seal on his taste for repose and unoffending criticism. The revelation of a new world and of the virtues leading thereto came too late for him. He was not capable

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except in a few lightning strokes of enthusiasm of turning against all his luxury and his humanist's abundant spiritual part. The wisdom of nations says that the cost is only in the first step, while, in truth, it is the last step which costs too dear.

Here is the burning truth : it is because he was too old that France insensibly fell back into the gilded bonds of capitalist democracy, whose comedies he had so plainly pierced to the light of day, just as he returned to the Academy which he mistrusted, like the free-thinker who, divorced from his will-power (a spectre which haunted Renan), clasps his hands in prayer on his death bed.

We experienced the bitterness of seeing him succumb to the influence of certain ones who lay in wait around him, of seeing him figure in the official sequel as Supreme Grand Functionary of Literature. The lamentable eclecticism of those who celebrated in panegyrics his benevolent and sociable self-assurance ought not all the same to have induced in him the change. And he made an appeal in favour of the *Bloc des Gauches*. If he had not then been approaching the term of his long career he would not have allowed himself thus to belie, even in a few circumstantial words, so many right things he had written.

He confessed it to me one day. He said to me, one of the last times that I saw him : " Yes, I well understand what you say to me . . . *Yes, he who wills the end, wills the means.* But I cannot follow you. I am old. But I do feel that in the end you are right." He gave me a blank sheet of paper at the foot of which he wrote his signature, and said to me, " You can write what you like on this sheet. I endorse it in advance, and never will I rise up against it."

I have not thought it my duty to use this blank signature. But I preserve it preciously as a moving proof of the effort attempted in the decline of his life by this perfect observer to enter into the field of the action and the salvation of the poor. Had he then been capable of using his mind to the full, his memory would have become greater and more splendid among the men of the future. The illuminating and delicious artist would have transfigured himself into a forerunner and architect of a sacred reality. He could have done it, he who could do everything, surrounded as he was by a universal respect that amounted to a cult. But destiny

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forcibly withdrew him from his duty at the moment when he was preparing to live up to it, and he was enshrouded, even before he had closed his eyes, beneath the tributes of the powers that be and the enthusiastic clamours of the charlatans and court jesters of the established order, who have, 'tis pity, claimed him as one of themselves, their greatest man.

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THE STABILITY OF CAPITALISM, OR THE UNSTABLE COMMUNISTS

(Concerning the Plan of General Dawes, the Plan of my Friend Philips Price and some other Questions)

By KARL RADEK

SOME Communists who have been frightened to death by the Dawes Plan began recently, in the midst of the noise aroused by this plan, to overhaul their stock of ideas and to adapt themselves to the supposed end of the era of social revolution. Two of them, Newbold and Philips Price, have drawn the political conclusions from their deliberations and left the Communist Party of Great Britain. But the MacDonald Government, in whose wake they had decided to be towed, no longer exists.

Does the Overthrow of MacDonald mean the End of the Era of Democracy and of Pacifism?

Many will answer this question with an unconditional yes. Why? What sort of a democrat is Mr. Baldwin, what kind of pacifists are Curzon and Churchill, who have once again taken over political power in England? But have we not pointed out during the whole of the past year that the Government of MacDonald was not capable of conducting any other policy than an imperialist policy, and that they were strangling democracy in China, Egypt and India? Why, then, should the overthrow of this Government mean the end of the era of democracy and of pacifism, which, as it was neither democratic nor pacifist, must obviously have been something else?

But this is not the only thing. As is known, at the beginning of this era the return of American finance-capital to Europe played a very active rôle. At the christening of the democratic-pacifist era there stood as godfathers, not only MacDonald and Herriot,

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but the well-known "democrat" and "pacifist" Morgan. This shows that it was by no means necessary to be a member of the Labour Party or a left petty-bourgeois Radical in order to have the right to act as godfather to the democratic and pacifist era.

The nature of the pacifist-democratic "era" consists in the fact that we have before us the collaboration of Anglo-American finance-capital to enslave those countries which stand in need of foreign capital. The capitalism of the United States and of England promise to be mutually threatening rivals in the future. But at the present moment they have not yet decided to quarrel with each other, but, on the contrary, to form a robbers' syndicate in order to avoid these quarrels. Democracy and pacifism served them as a useful means for carrying on their business. If Messrs. Norman and Morgan had inserted advertisements in the newspapers: "The Banking House of Morgan, the Bank of England, Lloyds Bank, &c., wish to inform their esteemed customers that they have united for the purpose of carrying on a sheep-shearing business in Germany, France, Austria, Hungary, China and other countries," it would not have tended to promote their business much. The signboard: "Era of Democracy and Pacifism" not only facilitates the floating of loans, but also reduces the working expenses of the whole undertaking.

In addition to this there was hidden in these pacifist democratic slogans the conviction of the Anglo-American Stock Exchange sharks that, as they had now united, no one would venture to attack them. Germany would be compelled to grovel on all fours, as apart from England and America she would not receive any private credits for her industry. In China it would be possible to establish order by supporting one military clique against the other to a certain point, and finally presenting a bill to both of them, whilst it would be possible to crush Russia by means of a financial blockade.

What change is there made in this policy as a result of the overthrow of the MacDonald Government? The signboard of democratic pacifism will become still more battered and dented. The mask of democratic pacifism will fall from the good-natured countenance of Mr. Baldwin. The nature of the so-called democratic-pacifist era, which consists in the efforts of Anglo-American

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finance-capital to thrust aside French and Japanese imperialism and to take over the exploitation of Western and Central Europe and China, will become plainly apparent. Petty-bourgeois democracy was a bridge and a shield for Anglo-American finance-capital. It has crossed this bridge and has no more need for it. The shield was flung aside quicker than one expected. The real work has begun. The era of democracy and pacifism is not at an end, but the Anglo-American collaboration has only just begun. This collaboration will also have an end; it will be torn asunder by the contradictions of capitalism in England and America, but the beginning of this end is not yet in sight.

The Stabilisation of Capitalism and the Experts' Plan

When the Experts' Plan was published on April 9 last, the whole international bourgeois Press cried out: "These are the new Ten Commandments, and from this day there begins a new era in the development of humanity." And when we Communists, after reading through this Experts' Plan, declared that it would not solve a single one of the questions connected with the impossibility of the payment of reparations, that it only delayed every question, and that the only real thing in this plan was the enslavement of Germany by Anglo-American capital, then the Social-Democratic Press began to reproach us with being revolutionary illusionists who are afraid to look facts in the face, for the Experts' Plan destroys the prospects of revolution. In the last two months, however, the voices in the camp of the bourgeois scientists and publicists who say the same as we have said have begun to be heard more frequently.

The Dawes Plan has not disclosed any miraculous means for stabilising capitalism. It is a means for enslaving Germany by Anglo-American capital, but it can also end with the collapse of Anglo-American collaboration, with an attempt at an Anglo-French business agreement—a pre-requisite for which is the fact that France, as the neighbour of Germany on the Continent and as the chief creditor of Germany, possesses enormous means of exerting pressure upon the latter in her own interests and, when necessary, in the interests of the Americans.

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The Unstable Communists and the Dawes Plan

The Dawes Plan, which constitutes a stage in the struggle of world imperialism, has terribly frightened the unstable Communists. They have accepted it as that which world policy proclaimed it to be—the end of world revolution. We will not speak of Newbold, whose resignation from the Party leaves a nasty taste in the mouth. In the article in which Newbold declared why, after being for three years in the ranks of the Communist Party, he now resigns, one recognises the undertones of the usual intellectual careerist. Mr. Newbold admits that at a certain age it is very agreeable for a man to sit in Parliament, and that there are worse things in the world than the British Empire. We regret that the English electors have not arrived at the conviction that the age of Mr. Newbold warrants his being sent to Parliament, but we do not give up hope that his longing will yet be fulfilled, and that he will be able to cover one of the green benches in Parliament with that portion of his anatomy which, it appears, is the most valuable part of him.

The case is somewhat different with Philips Price. The latter, a young, honest, English intellectual, became a Communist in Russia when, as correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian*, he passed through the revolution. His articles, in which he defended the Russian revolution, played a great rôle during the period of intervention. As correspondent of the *Daily Herald* in Berlin he helped in the most disinterested manner the fighting German workers, and created a good name for himself in the English Labour Movement. Philips Price has actually come to the conviction that the paper on which the Dawes Plan is inscribed puts an end to world revolution. Even our English Communists, in their answer to his articles, praised Philips Price as one possessing a great knowledge of Marxism.

As a matter of fact we have to do here with a philistine and not with a Marxist, for how could the Dawes Plan mean the end of world revolution? There exist two possibilities: either the Dawes Plan is the expression, throughout the world, of an era of the liquidation of the acute international and social conflicts, or it is merely an attempt to arrest the advancing decay of capitalism. In the first case the Dawes Plan would mean that the special

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elements of revolution which were left behind by the war are already exhausted, that the revolution must be nourished by new conflicts, which will be created by a new era of imperialism. Even when one accepts such an estimate of the international situation as a premise for reasoning, even then it does not admit any liquidatory tendencies. Have not we radical Marxists pointed out before the war that the era of imperialism produces the era of social revolution ?

Is Philips Price perchance in agreement with the reformist estimate of the Dawes Plan, which repeats the asseverations of the English and American bankers that it will bring peace and universal prosperity to humanity ? No, God forbid ! Philips Price published an article in THE LABOUR MONTHLY in which he pointed out that if the Dawes Plan is carried out there will result an enormous sharpening of the social crisis, not only in Germany, but also in England, that the Dawes Plan means an era of new imperialist conflicts.

If that be the case, what, in this situation, is the task of the defender of the interests of the working class ? To organise the working class for the coming revolutionary struggles. This task appears the more important as the assertion that the war crisis is already passed is in contradiction to all the facts. Neither the political consequences of the war nor its economic consequences are liquidated. The burden of the Peace of Versailles still exists, the inter-allied debts remain, the awakening of the East is proceeding. Not one of the results of the war has been liquidated. The old social and international conflicts are combining with the new and are creating a situation in which the working class must hasten with all its preparations, in order that the new wave of revolution shall not be met with such ideological confusion and organisatory division as that with which the revolutionary wave of the year 1919 was met. The tragedy of the German October consists in the fact that the ideological and organisatory preparation of the proletariat was not commensurate with the revolutionary conflict.

Price can say, however: What is Europe to us English ? Firstly this means the repudiation of the international outlook, the return to insular cretinism, which Price up to now has

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endeavoured to combat: whereby he aroused the hate of his three Conservative aunts who, at the time of the election, held him up at the one and same time as an agent of Kaiser Wilhelm and of Lenin. But even from the English standpoint Philips Price is entirely in the wrong. If the stabilisation of European capitalism is not brought about in the next few years, then in England also the strengthening of the class antagonisms will proceed at a most rapid rate. What then? Will Price in these coming struggles accompany the English workers under the leadership of Mac-Donald and Thomas, who form the loyal Opposition of his Majesty the King of England?

Price points to various faults in tone and in other musical things which have been committed by our English comrades. Perhaps our English comrades are more capable of conducting a cats' chorus than a symphony concert. From this it would only follow that one must fight in their ranks and not desert them. But it is also incorrect. The English Communists are carrying out a difficult task, which has greater historical importance than all the sophistries of well-educated English Socialist gentlemen. They are steeling that group of English workers, which is still small, who are learning to hate English capitalism and to fight against it. In order to destroy the enormous machine of English imperialism, an iron phalanx is necessary, people are necessary who are as hard as steel. Perhaps our English Communists are not as flexible as steel, but steel is made from iron ore, which also is not flexible.

Even the plan of General Dawes to rescue capitalism is in fact, in spite of all its illusionism, stronger than the plan of Philips Price, which consists of revolutionising the English Labour Movement by liquidating the Communist Party of Great Britain. If we speak of this philistine plan of Philips Price, it is because it appears as the expression of certain tendencies in many circles of unstable West-European Communists who have been brought to Communism on the wave of revolution, but who do not understand how to prepare the workers for the new wave of revolution. This Dawes epidemic is, therefore, useful, as it reveals the superficiality of the education of the Communist intellectuals in Western Europe and the instability of their convictions. The Communist

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is not he who, at the moment of the victory of the proletariat, speaks in favour of Soviets, but he who in the periods of stagnation, in the periods of the quiet organising process of history, works for the Soviets.

We are now passing through a period when there is a lack of immediate revolutionary struggles; but it is hard even to speak of peaceful times in this time of most profound class and imperialist antagonism. This time when it is apparent to all eyes that new gigantic battles of the awakened East and of the working class of Europe, new battles of the imperialist giants, are in course of preparation.

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On the Road to Insurrection—III[1]

ONE OF THE FUNDAMENTAL QUESTIONS OF REVOLUTION

By V. I. LENIN

[TRANSLATION COPYRIGHT]

SEPTEMBER 14, 1917.

THE most important question of all revolution is undoubtedly that of political power. In the hands of which class does power lie? There is the whole question on which depends the destiny of the country. And when the principal governing party of Russia complains in its organ (*cf. Dielo Naroda*, No. 147) that the discussions about power overlook the question of the Constituent Assembly and that of the food supply, one can justly answer: Gentlemen of the Social-Revolutionary Party, speak for yourselves only. It is the hesitations, the irresolution of your party which have most contributed to the prolongation of "ministerialism" and to the endless postponement of the convocation of the Constituent Assembly, and have allowed the capitalists to scrap the measures elaborated and adopted for effectively enforcing the cereals' monopoly[2] and revictualling the country.

The question of power cannot be evaded or relegated to the background, for it is the fundamental question which determines the whole development of the revolution in both its foreign and its domestic politics. Our revolution has lost half a year in hesitations over the organisation of power; that is an incontestable fact, and this fact has its origin in the political oscillations of the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks. Now, the policy of these parties has been itself determined, in the last analysis, by the character of the petit-bourgeoisie, by its economic instability in the struggle between Capital and Labour.

[1] The first two sections appeared last month. [2] Decree of March 25.

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The whole question at present is to know whether the democratic petit-bourgeoisie has learnt anything during six months so extraordinarily rich in events. If it has learnt nothing, the revolution is lost, and only the victorious insurrection of the proletariat will be able to save it. If it has learnt anything, it will have to set about creating immediately a firm and stable power. During a popular revolution it is only a power which relies openly and without reserve on the *majority* of the population that can be a stable power, that is to say, capable of appealing to the life of the masses, the majority of the workers and peasants. At the present moment, political power in Russia still rests in the hands of the bourgeoisie, who are obliged to make merely partial concessions (to withdraw them the next day), to scatter promises (which are never kept), and to find ways of masking their domination (to deceive the people by the appearance of "a loyal coalition," &c.). In words, we have a popular, democratic, revolutionary Government; in reality, we are in the presence of a Government anti-popular, anti-democratic, counter-revolutionary, bourgeois. There lies the fundamental contradiction existing hitherto, which has caused this instability, these oscillations of power, and which has provoked this succession of ministries to which Messieurs the Social Revolutionaries and Mensheviks have lent themselves with a zeal so disastrous (to the people).

Either the dissolution of the Soviets and their inglorious death, or all power to the Soviets; that is what I said before the All-Russia Congress of Soviets at the beginning of the month of June, 1917, and the history of the months of July and August have fully confirmed the truth of those words. Only Soviet power can be stable and actually depend on the majority of the people, whatever may say the flunkeys of the bourgeoisie, Potresov,[3] Plekhanov and others, whose explanations of an "enlargement of the basis of power" result in effect in a transmission of power to an infinitesimal minority of the population, to the bourgeoisie, to the exploiters.

Soviet power alone can be stable; it alone cannot be overthrown even in the most tortured hours of the most stormy revolution, it only will be able to assure a wide and steady development of the

[3] One of the founders of Social Democracy, leader of the Menshevik liquidators, partisan-like Plekhanov, of simple bourgeois democracy.

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revolution, with the peaceful concurrence of all parties inside the Soviets. But if it does not exist, there will be hesitations, irresolution, instability, innumerable crises, comedies of ministerial resignations and new shufflings of portfolios, explosions to the right and to the left.

But frequently, if not invariably, the slogan "Power to the Soviets" is understood in a completely false fashion. In effect it is taken to mean a ministry recruited by the parties forming the majority of the Soviets, and it is this profoundly erroneous opinion that we wish to examine in detail.

"A ministry recruited from the parties forming the majority of the Soviets," that is to say, a change in the personal composition of the Cabinet, that is to say, the integral conservation of all the former machinery of State power, machinery essentially bureaucratic, essentially undemocratic, incapable of realising a single serious reform, even those that figure in the programmes of the Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks.

The slogan "Power to the Soviets" signifies a radical transformation of all the former machinery of State, of this apparatus of officialdom which fetters all democratic initiative; it implies the suppression of this machinery and its substitution by a new popular, truly democratic machinery, that is to say, by the machinery of the Soviets, which represent the organised and armed majority of the people—workers, soldiers and peasants. "Power to the Soviets," it is this that gives free scope to the initiative of the majority of the people, not only in the election of deputies, but in the administration of the State, in the realisation of reforms and social transformation.

To make this difference still more clear and more perceptible we will recall a fact avowed a short time ago, by the newspaper of the leading party, the *Dielo Naroda*, organ of the Social Revolutionaries. "Even in the ministries in which Socialists have had a share," writes this paper during the famous coalition with the Cadets, when the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries held ministerial portfolios, "even in these ministries, all the administrative machinery remained absolutely unaltered, and this machinery curbed all their work."

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This indeed is comprehensible. The whole history of parliamentary bourgeois countries shows that the changes of ministry have only very little importance, for all effective work, all the administration, is in the hands of a gigantic army of bureaucrats. Now, this army in impregnated to the marrow with a spirit essentially anti-democratic, it is attached by thousands and thousands of ties to the big property-holders and to the bourgeoisie, on whom it depends in every sphere. This army swims in a bourgeois atmosphere from which it is absolutely impossible for it to escape. Bound by immobile, mummified forms it is unable to modify in anything its habits of thought, feeling and action. It is based on the hierarchical principle, on certain privileges reserved to the functions of State; by the intervention of banks, the upper-grade bureaucrats become subservient to finance-capital, of which they are, to a certain degree, the agents, whose interests they defend and whose influence they propagate.

To believe that by means of this State machinery such social transformation as the suppression without compensation of the big property-holders in the cereal monopoly, &c., can be brought about is utterly to delude oneself, and is at the same time to fool the people. A republican bourgeoisie could use this machinery to create a republic of the type of "a monarchy without a monarch," like the Third French Republic, but it is absolutely incapable of achieving radical reform; I do not say of abolishing, but simply of limiting in a more or less effective way the rights of capital and the "sacred rights" of individual property. It is for this reason that, in all the coalition ministries in which "Socialists" participated, the latter, even if they were of good faith, were only a vain ornament or a screen for the bourgeois Government, a buffer against popular indignation, an instrument for duping the masses. That had been the rôle of Louis Blanc in 1848; that had been, since then, the rôle of innumerable coalition ministries in England and France; that had been the rôle of Tchernov and of Tseretelli in 1917[4] and so it will remain as long as the bourgeois regime lasts and the old bourgeois State apparatus based on bureaucracy exists in its integrity.

[4] Tchernov, Social Revolutionary leader, Minister of Agriculture; Tseretelli, Social Democrat, Minister of Posts and Telegraphs in the Coalition Cabinet of May 6,

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Now, one of the fundamental merits of the Soviets, of the workers', soldiers' and peasants' deputies, is that they represent a type of State machinery infinitely superior and incomparably more democratic. The Social Revolutionaries and the Mensheviks undertook the impossible in their endeavour to transform the Soviets (particularly that of Petrograd, as also the All-Russian Soviet, that is, the Central Executive Committee) into vague talking shops, occupied solely, under cover of "control," in voting impotent resolutions on what they desire, the realisation of which the Government, with the most exquisite urbanity, postpones to the Greek Kalends.[5] But it only needed the escapade of Kornilov, that fresh breeze, forerunner of a good storm, temporarily to purify from all its miasmas the atmosphere of the Soviets and to restore the initiative of the revolutionary masses which is revealed in all its grandeur, in all its power, in all its invincibility.[6]

May this historical example be a lesson for all men of little faith. Shame on those who say, "We have no machinery to replace the old machinery, which tends inevitably to the defence of the bourgeoisie." This machinery does exist. This machinery is the Soviets. Do not mistrust the initiative of the masses, have confidence in the revolutionary organisations and you will see the workers and peasants bring to bear in *every* sphere of public life the force, the majesty, the invincibility of which they gave proof in their union, in their enthusiasm against Kornilov.[7]

The Social Revolutionary and Menshevik leaders have not had confidence in the masses, they have doubted their initiative, they have trembled before their revolutionary energy instead of supporting it without reserve; that has been their great crime. It is there that one must seek the principal cause of their indecision, of their hesitation, of their perpetual—and perpetually vain—attempts to pour new wine into the old bottles of the former bureaucratic machine.

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[5] This is the opinion not only of Lenin, but also of the anti-Bolshevik Social Democrat Soukhanov given in his *Memoirs of the Revolution.*

[6] The victory over Kornilov was less the work of the Government than of the Soviets and of the initiative of the workers themselves. Miliukov recognised this in his *History of the Second Revolution*, Vol. II.

[7] See the development of these ideas on the rôle of the Soviets in *Can the Bolsheviks Maintain Power?* and in *The State and Revolution.*

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Take the history of the democratisation of the army in the Russian revolution of 1917, the history of the Minister Tchernov,[8] the history of the "reign" of Paltchinsky, the history of the resignation of Piechekhovon,[9] and you will see in each a striking confirmation of what I have just said. The lack of confidence towards the organisations elected by the soldiers, the incomplete realisation of the principle of election of officers by the soldiers, have had the result of leaving the Kornilovs, Kaledins and counter-revolutionary officers at the head of the army. That is a fact, and, short of deliberately shutting one's eyes, it is impossible not to see that, after the insurrection of Kornilov, the Kerensky Government allowed the former situation to continue and, in fact, restored "Kornilovism." The nomination of Alexéiev, the "peace" with Klembovsky, Gagavine, Bagration and other "Kornilovians," the indulgence to Kornilov and Kaledin themselves, all goes to show as clear as day that Kerensky in fact restored "Kornilovism."

There is no middle course, experience has demonstrated that. Either all power to the Soviets and the complete democratisation of the army—or reaction.

Take the history of the Minister Tchernov. Was it not shown that every attempt, however frivolous, to satisfy the needs of the peasants in a real fashion, that every act of confidence towards them and their mass organisations was accepted with the utmost enthusiasm by the entire peasant class? And Tchernov was forced for nearly four months "to bargain with the Left," with the Cadets and officials, who by their shufflings and perpetual adjournments compelled him at the end of the deal to give in his resignation having been able to achieve nothing. During those four months the landlords and capitalists gained their end; they saved, for the moment, the big landed properties, retarded the convocation of the Constituent Assembly and even launched a campaign of repression against the agrarian committees.

There is no middle term. All power to the Soviets at the centre and in the provinces, all land to the peasants, *immediately*, according to the decision of the Constituent Assembly, otherwise

[8] He refused to let the peasants take the land of the big proprietors.

[9] Minister of Supply, he retired on August 26 because Kerensky, at the demand of the big proprietors, wished to double the State purchase price of corn.

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the landed nobility and the capitalists will crab everything, restore their power, exasperate the peasants so far that they will unloose the most furious *jacquerie.*

In the same way the capitalists (with the help of Paltchinsky) have made hay of all serious control over production, and the merchants have obstructed the operation of the cereal monopoly and the regulated democratic rationing of bread and food products undertaken by Piechekhonov.

It is not the time now, in Russia, to invent "new" reforms, to evolve plans for a general transformation the capitalists, the Potressovs, the Plekhanovs, who clamour against "the installation of socialism," against "the dictatorship of the proletariat," would cunningly have you believe. In reality, the insupportable burdens and scourges of the war, the formidable dangers of disorganisation and of famine have already shown where the situation is leading; they have already indicated—what am I saying !—they have already forced an urgent realisation of such indispensable reforms and readjustments as are the cereal monopoly, the control of production and rationing, the restriction of the issue of paper money, a regular exchange of corn for merchandise, &c.

These measures everybody recognises[10] are an absolute necessity, and they have begun to be applied in many places. But the realisation of these policies is trammelled by the resistance of the big proprietors and of the capitalists, resistance exercised through the agency of the Kerensky Government (a government at bottom bourgeois and bonapartist), through the agency of the administrative apparatus of the former Government by means of the direct or indirect pressure of Russian and Allied finance-capital.

Deploring the resignation of Piechekhonov and the failure of the taxation and of the cereal monopoly, I. Prilejaïev wrote quite recently in the *Dielo Naroda* (No. 147): "The absence of courage and the spirit of decision, which has marked all our governments, has been due to their composition. . . . The democratic revolution ought not to hesitate, it ought itself to exhibit initiative and to interfere systematically in the economic chaos. . . . If ever the

[10] Even the Mensheviks and the Social Revolutionaries; they were a party to the programme adopted by the majority of the State Conference on August 14.

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necessity of a positive and absolute power made itself felt, it is now."

That is the truth. Here are words of gold. Only, there is one thing that has not struck the author: it is that the firm line, the courage and the spirit of decision are not questions of persons, they depend on the class that is capable of showing these qualities. Now this class is uniquely the proletariat. A courageous, resolute authority which takes a firm line, what is it but the dictatorship of the proletariat and of the poorer ranks of the peasant class? Without doubt I. Prilejaïev yearns after that dictatorship.

What will this dictatorship actually signify? The definite wiping out of "Kornilovians" and the democratisation of the army. The day following its installation it will be welcomed with enthusiasm by 99 per cent. of the army. In that it gives the land to the peasants and full power to the local committees of peasants, will not the dictatorship be supported without reserve by the latter? What Piechekhonov only promises ("the capitalist resistance is destroyed" said he in his famous speech in the Soviet Congress), the dictatorship will actually realise, and to do that it will not demolish the democratic organisations which are beginning to be set up for the revictualling, control, &c.; on the contrary, it will support them and develop them in suppressing all that hampers their operation.

Only the dictatorship of the proletariat and the poor peasants is capable of conquering the resistance of the capitalists, of showing in the exercise of power the maximum of courage and decision, of obtaining the enthusiastic, complete and heroic support of the great mass of the army and also of the naval population.

Power to the Soviets, that is the only means of assuring gradual, peaceful evolution, unscathed by events; of carrying through this evolution side by side with the development of consciousness; of the power of decision and of experience in the majority of the masses of the population. Power to the Soviets, that is the entire transmission of the country and of economic control to the workers and peasants, to which none dare offer resistance and which learns rapidly, by practice, how to distribute to the best advantage the land, products and corn.

(*To be continued*)

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RECONSTRUCTING EUROPE[1]

By MANABENDRA NATH ROY

"SOCIAL Democracy has become the third party (left wing) of the bourgeoisie." This poignant remark of Zinovieff in his report to the Fifth World Congress of the Communist International has been amply borne out by facts. The action of Social Democracy during the year preceding the fifth congress warranted this remark; but subsequent action has corroborated it, if corroboration was still required. The despicable degeneration of Social Democracy and political schools allied to it is the most outstanding feature of the world to-day. The British Labour Party, which cannot even be called Social Democratic, stands at the head of this process of degeneration.

Great political parties, which for decades paraded as working-class organisations, and pretended to be working for the substitution of the capitalist system by a Socialist society, are to-day the outspoken advocates of "reconstruction" on a capitalist basis. They may not always say so; but in fact that is precisely what they stand for. Besides, there are the Marxian economists, led by Hilferding, who preach that capitalism has not done its job yet, and that to rally to the rescue of this "revolutionary" agency is an historic necessity. These renegades to all intents and purposes virtually represent the essential character of international Social Democracy.

Insatiable imperialist greed plunged the European bourgeoisie in the cataclysmic war which irreparably undermined capitalist economy by throwing the mode of commodity production into a chronic state of chaos and anarchy. For more than five years after the armed conflict had been brought to an apparent close, the bourgeoisie tried by all conceivable means to extricate themselves from this ruinous mess of their own creation, but with no appreciable success. In fact, things steadily went from bad to worse, some local indications of temporary betterment notwithstanding. To

[1] This article was written before the defeat of the Labour Government, but it loses none of its value thereby as an analysis of European affairs during the period of Mr. MacDonald's administration.—EDITOR, THE LABOUR MONTHLY.

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escape the disastrous consequences of one war, they plunged Europe into a permanent state of war; while talking hypocritically of disarmament, they went on feverishly preparing for future wars, which would be more murderous and more destructive than the last; failing to regain economic equilibrium by normal methods of production and exchange, they adopted such violent means as the Ruhr occupation; they signally failed to arrest the industrial anarchy as expressed by chronic under-production on the one hand, and incurable unemployment on the other. Empires showed signs of tottering. Brutal oppression only incensed the rebellious colonial masses, while a policy of reconciliation ominously made for eventual disruption. In a number of European countries, even the pretence of democracy and constitutional government were discarded. Undisguised dictatorship was tried in Germany, Italy, Spain, Bulgaria and Greece, but with hardly any better result. The bourgeoisie were at their wits' end. At this juncture the Social Democrats and the allied breed came very handy. The bourgeoisie resolved to let them try their hand in saving capitalism.

This combination has inaugurated what is called the period of pacifist illusion. The programme of reconstructing Europe by peaceful means has once more entered the realm of practical politics. Ramsay MacDonald has stepped into the shoes of the late but unlamented Woodrow Wilson as the saviour of humanity. The Wilsonian Covenant has been replaced by the Dawes Plan. Where the professor failed, the financier must succeed. German "Marxists," French Radicals and English Pacifists are unanimous in this conviction. The New Era has begun. The London Conference and the Fifth Assembly of the League of Nations mark the stages of advance.

Now, how did the new era begin? Did the nonplussed bourgeoisie invite the Social Democrats and their allies to take up the reins of government in Britain, France and several minor countries? Or did the latter come to power by dint of their own strength? Neither the one course nor the other. The juxtaposition of several political factors contributed to the development of the situation. The advent of the Labour Government in Britain marked the beginning of the new era. It is a mistake to think that the Labour Party was placed in office purposely by the bourgeoisie.

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Just remember the terrible scare that was felt all over the country when a Labour Government could be considered to be within the realm of practical politics. What a howl of horror was raised! To the bourgeoisie, a Labour Government was analogous to revolution. The most powerful section of the bourgeoisie, represented by the Tory Party, did everything possible to prevent the advent of a Labour Government. Finally, the bourgeoisie became reconciled to the monstrosity of a Labour Government only by making a virtue of necessity. A sense of practical politics told them that Labour could not be kept out without dissipating the constitutional illusions which stand between the revolution and the British proletariat.

Another factor that made the advent of a Labour Government possible was the conflict of interests between the two wings of the bourgeoisie, representing two forms of capital—Finance, allied with heavy key industries (coal and iron), and Manufacturing, together with commerce. The decay of capitalist economy, and the consequent chronic industrial chaos, had sharpened this conflict between the two sections of the British bourgeoisie. This internal contradiction of capitalism reflected both on the home and foreign politics of Great Britain. It has also affected the colonial policy, although not so very acutely as yet. In home politics, the classical controversy over Protection *v.* Free Trade was revived; but since the industrial crisis in Great Britain could not be overcome independently of the world capitalist economy as a whole, this hackneyed controversy was futile. The fundamental political rivalry revolved upon the axis of foreign politics, and the *summum bonum* of capitalist world politics was the Reparation Problem—that is to help Europe recover from the ruins of the war. The great financial combines, operating politically through the Conservative Party, desired the colonisation of Europe, and were not particularly averse to using French militarism as the police force. The manufacturing and commercial interests, on the other hand, represented by the Liberal Party, were in favour of reviving the European market, which could not be done unless the twentieth-century Napoleonism of France was defeated and Germany set back on her feet—in short, the war declared to have been a momentous folly. This clash of interests did not permit the two

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bourgeois parties to combine against Labour. Only such a combination could have prevented the advent of the Labour Government within the framework of the existing constitution.

The Liberals thought it advisable to fight the Tories in coalition with the Labour Party, especially since the latter subscribed in full to the Liberal Programme of the capitalist reconstruction of Europe, and could be easily induced to pigeonhole those few points on their home programme to which the Liberals took exception. Thus it is also true that the Labour Government could not be in office without the grace of the bourgeoisie, although returned to the Parliament in a considerably increased number. Being in the minority as against this Lib.-Lab. Coalition, the Conservatives, in their turn, found it necessary to mark time. So the Labour Party came into office, as it were, by default. Had there been the slightest indication that the Labour Government would try any Socialist prank, the bourgeoisie would make up their internal divergence, close up the ranks and keep Labour out. As this was not the case, and as the only anxiety of the British Labourites (one cannot call them Social Democrats) was to disprove the charges of anti-patriotism, anti-imperialism, anti-capitalism, &c., brought against them by the bourgeoisie, and to prove that they could do what the bourgeois Governments had failed to do, namely, to make Europe safe for capitalism (not even for democracy, as Wilson pretended), there was no particular objection to their becoming his Majesty's Ministers, *ad interim*. Both the bourgeois parties were conscious of their failure to drag Europe out of the ruinous mess. Of course, their faith in the eternal nature of capitalism was not seriously shaken. Not a few among them would just as soon go straight over to Fascism to maintain the domination of their class; but it could be done only by risking the possibility of a revolution, even in the safe and sane British Isles. If the Labour Government, by some miracle of democratic liberalism, could do the impossible—could stabilise the tottering capitalist system—why not let them try their hand at it? If they succeed, so much the better for the bourgeoisie. In that case, the latter would not hesitate to hail Ramsay MacDonald as the saviour of Europe, as they did the naively vain American school teacher, though their contempt for the theories of the one would not be any less than

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for those of the other. If not, there would be always time to fall back upon the methods of undisguised dictatorship, of blood and iron, which would then be justified by the fact that Labour had tried its programme and failed.

The third factor that contributed to the advent of the Labour Government was of an essentially revolutionary nature. It was the first sign that the British proletariat was losing faith in the capitalist system. The electoral success of the Labour Party should be looked upon by a real proletarian party as the signal for the approaching revolution. The proletarian masses, as it were, ordered their leaders to throw down the challenge to the bourgeoisie who had failed to reconstruct European social economy. This threatening mood of the working class induced the astute sections of the bourgeoisie to be careful in their dealing with the Labour Party, if a revolution were not to be precipitated. The vision of the masses was not sufficiently clear as yet. A " Labour Government " could still satisfy them, and at the same time could enlist the willing services of the Social Democrats to the ultimate benefit of the bourgeoisie.

Thus was ushered in the new era of " reconstruction by international understanding." The very first event of this new era proved that the Social Democrats and the Labourites were sold body and soul to the bourgeoisie, that there was no such thing as a Social Democratic or Labour policy. Social Democracy had become the third party of the bourgeoisie.

The MacDonald Government took up the Dawes Plan, prepared by the Commission of International Bankers (which had been brought into existence by Baldwin's Tory Cabinet with the approval even of Poincaré), as the Magna Charta of the new era. A remarkable " socialist " beginning indeed ! Europe should be reconstructed on the basis of this plan, drawn up by an agent of J. P. Morgan, and ratified by the banking and industrial concerns of the principal European countries. What happier solution could have been found ? Of course, it was happy only for the bourgeoisie, who were very pleased that their trick worked so easily, but damnable on the part of Social Democracy, and tragic for those who believed and followed these traitors of the working class.

The British example was followed in France. The Radical

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Socialist, Herriot, was placed at the head of the Government by the Social Democrats and reformist syndicalists on the one hand, and the liberal bourgeoisie on the other. Even before he came into office Herriot had declared that, although his party was opposed to the Ruhr adventure of Poincaré's *Bloc National*, still, once it had been occupied, the Ruhr Valley could not be evacuated unconditionally. In office he carries out the Ruhr policy of Poincaré, only using different words, but with no less disastrous consequences to the French workers and peasants.

In France, again, there operated an analogous juxtaposition of forces to bring about a Social Democratic Government. (The Herriot Cabinet is no more purely Social Democratic in composition than the MacDonald Cabinet, but the Social Democrats are practically in it.) Heavy industry drove Poincaré to the Ruhr; but this policy made surely for eventual war, the ominous vision of which alarmed the other wing of the bourgeoisie. Once the utmost possible benefit had been derived by the party concerned, namely, the French iron and steel trusts, the Ruhr deadlock had to be brought to an end. It could not be pushed forward without courting a disastrous end. It became necessary to extricate French capitalism out of the uncomfortable position, without losing the precious prestige. Poincaré had committed himself too much to retreat. His Napoleonism was rejected, not only by the workers and peasants, but by a considerable section of the bourgeoisie. He lost his majority in the Chamber; but the *Bloc National* still remained the single largest political combination. Single-handed, the liberal bourgeoisie were obviously not in a position to keep Poincaré out of the Quai d'Orsay. In fact, Poincaré himself was not keen upon shouldering the burden of office. Therefore he delegated Loucheur to swell the ranks of the *Bloc des Gauches*. It was convenient to be in the Opposition at this moment. Why not let the Socialists draw the chestnuts out of the fire? Thus the Socialists came into office to oblige both the wings of the bourgeoisie, and the new era dawned upon la belle France—Renaudel, Paul Boncour, Jouhoux and Co. cheering the saviour Herriot by waving the tricolour of the Grande Revolution. The *drapeau rouge* was tucked into the pocket, to be brandished rather furtively in workers' meetings.

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The ground was ready for the next step. General Dawes, personifying simultaneously the military and financial power of the United States, was holding out his infamous plan, blessed unanimously by the world bourgeoisie. The German Social Democrats, the classical vanguard of international Social Democracy, had already accepted the plan as the charter of freedom for the German proletariat. It was only left for MacDonald and Herriot (through whom spoke Renaudel and Paul Boncour) to start out on their evangelical mission, armed with this mandate. The London Conference met, over which presided Ramsay MacDonald with all the airs of the new Messiah.

The Dawes Plan is a remarkable document. All the cleverness as well as the greed of the world bourgeoisie went into its composition. If Europe, ruined by the imperialist war, will be saved by this Plan, the credit must go, not to MacDonald and his naive vanity, but to American finance, aggrandised and but little scathed by the devastations of the war. Firstly, the plan is a serious attempt to reconcile the antagonism between the two vertical groups into which the capitalist system is rent. It devises a means how banking capital and manufacturing capital can both feast on the carcase of prostrate Europe. Secondly, it is a scheme for the colonisation of Europe by Anglo-American finance (in which combination the American element should predominate)—to reduce the working class of Germany and other east European countries to the level of the Asiatic masses. It is this monstrous plan, which he inherited from his Tory predecessor, which has lent Mr. MacDonald the wings of an angel.

Now, if governments headed, for example, by Poincarés or Baldwins, should try to put this plan into operation there would be no end to the suspicion as to its altruistic motive. Even the liberal bourgeoisie must oppose it, if only to maintain their political identity. Socialist and Labour parties, of course, should be absolutely against it. In that case, it would be almost impossible to carry out the plan. Socialist and Labour Governments coming to office by default, and remaining there by the grace of the bourgeoisie, were, therefore, a god-sent opportunity. In the hands of ex-pacifists and pseudo-Socialists this predatory plan assumes the appearance of a decree of liberation, a token of goodwill, a guarantee of peace. It is

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expected that this stratagem will deceive the working class; that the latter will submit to the inhuman exploitation, because it is approved by their " leaders " for the sake of " reconstruction and peace." Well, that remains to be seen. Meanwhile what is sure is the abject prostitution of Social Democracy.

It would be erroneous to believe that the bourgeoisie entrust their third party with the actual administration of the plan of reconstruction of their own making. No, they have nothing but contempt for the intellect and ability of their servitors, whose faithfulness, however, they do not doubt, and whom they employ as propagandists. After the solid work had been accomplished by the princes of international finance in London, Mr. MacDonald went to Geneva for propaganda purposes—to raise a cloud of illusions about Disarmament, International Arbitration, Mutual Co-operation and what not. All these stage effects were meant to hide the dirty deal made under his very nose in London—to apply an anaesthetic while the painful operation is performed on the body of Europe.

It was not without considerable difficulty that the Allies—that is to say, America, Britain and France—came to an agreement over the Dawes Plan. The difficulty was concerning the division of the pound of flesh to be extracted from Germany in return for the forty million pounds loan. It involved the questions of participation in the proposed loan, and that of the guarantee for it. The security demanded from and conceded by Germany, in the last analysis, is nothing but the supposed ability of her working people to work more for less wages, in order that the reparation problem might be solved to the satisfaction of the bourgeoisie, victorious and vanquished alike. The prolongation of the working day in Germany, and the lowering of the standard of living of the German working class, would inevitably reflect in Britain, as well as in other industrial countries, to the detriment of the proletariat. But a Labour Government, which was supposed to be the moving spirit and directing genius of the London Conference, had nothing to stipulate on this score. If they did, the Dawes Plan would fall flat, and European reconstruction would remain a mirage (which it will in any case). But Mr. MacDonald would rather be the saviour of the humanity than a defender of the sordid material

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interests of the British proletariat, not to mention those of the German workers.

The guarantee demanded from Germany was essentially satisfactory; there was, however, a difference of opinion as to how this guarantee would be made operative. These differences were caused by the suspicion that one capitalist group might steal a march upon another; that the German bourgeoisie might make away with more than they should get as slave-driver. The struggle for supremacy between Anglo-American finance and the French Steel Trust almost threatened to wreck the Conference. The former would not grant the credit to Germany, upon which the Plan hinged, unless the "jugular vein" of German industry, and particularly the railways, were freed from the strangle-hold of French militarism. Business is badly managed by bristling bayonets. If the German railways, customs, forests, &c., were to be solvent pledges for the loan offered, they must be managed, not by generals, but by business men. In other words, the Anglo-Saxon business sense strongly disapproved of the French bullying methods for making the German workers atone for the sins of their rulers, past and present. The French, on their part, shook their head in distrust, and obstinately stuck to their own point of view: a bird in the hand is worth two in the bush. It was neither MacDonald's humanitarian formulæ, nor Snowden's "socialist" economics that steered the ship of the London Conference through these rocky shoals. In fact, the deal was done behind their backs, they having no more to say in the making of the Second Versailles than their spiritual predecessor, Wilson, had in the original. They only served as the willing tools of the bourgeoisie, which was trying to entrench itself for the last and decisive battles.

The second difficulty was to reconcile France—to make her see that the only hope of salvaging European capitalism was to accept the hegemony of Anglo-American finance. Although, financially, France stood in a rather weak position, yet by virtue of being in possession of the Ruhr, in addition to Lorraine and the Saar Basin conceded to her as the booty of war, she is not only the military dictator of Europe, but can dominate the industrial life of the Continent. An Anglo-American combination might put on the financial screw, but the French military domination of

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Europe could not be challenged without risking another war, which again would dash all hopes of capitalist reconstruction. This was the rock on which Poincaré stood and defied the chagrined allies of yesterday. The Dawes Plan proposed to bribe France out of the manger.

France agreed to the forty million pounds loan to Germany, on condition that the major part of this money would go into her own pockets in the shape of reparation payment. For the Anglo-American bankers who would finance the loan, the transaction was something like buying off from France the mortgage on Germany. By this golden chain the German bourgeoisie would be (very willingly) drawn into the Anglo-American orbit, thus driving a wedge between France and her east European vassals. France could not reject this ostensibly equitable offer without morally isolating herself.

Then arose the thorny question of the Ruhr evacuation, which had been made the *sine qua non* of the Dawes Plan. France would not throw away her trump card for anything on earth. Once more the London Conference was in grave danger. So long as France remained in the Ruhr, she would have a hand on Germany's throat. Consequently, she could always secure the co-operation of the German bourgeoisie (coal kings and iron magnates) for building up the gigantic Continental metallurgical combine which would be a dangerous rival for British and even American industry. But France could not be got out of the Ruhr just by asking, not even in return for the major part of the forty million pounds nominally loaned to Germany. MacDonald, energetically aided by his "socialist" Chancellor of the Exchequer, fought valiantly to safeguard, not the interests of the British proletariat menaced by this plan of capitalist reconstruction, but the future of the Armstrongs, Vickers and Baldwins. But all in vain. A hostile Chamber, led by Poincaré, supported by sections of the Government bloc (Loucheur, Painlevé and Briand groups), stared Herriot in the face, and he refused to be persuaded by his "dear friend" and spiritual colleague, MacDonald. Once more the Dawes Plan was in danger, and Mr. MacDonald's career as a more successful Wilson was at stake. The scheme to "deliver" Europe (to the ravages of capitalism) was saved, but not by the pacifist

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aphorisms of MacDonald; it was the mysterious visit to London of M. Loucheur, leader of the French Metallurgical Trust and representative of Poincaréism in essence, which smoothed the situation. The formula of "evacuation within one year" was accepted by Herriot, with the approval of Marshal Foch, for whose benediction the "victor of May 11"—the leader of the French democratic majority—had to rush to Paris in person. Even Poincaré benignly smiled upon his worthy successor, in the person of his secretary, who was present in London and amiably lunched with Herriot, just before he went to sign the "epoch-making" London Agreement. So, on the one hand, MacDonald personified the programme of the British bourgeoisie, unsuccessfully championed by Lloyd George, Bonar Law and Baldwin, while, on the other hand, Herriot carried through all the essentials of Poincaréism, freed from its clumsiness.

Thus under the cover of MacDonaldism, which typifies the worst prostitution of Social Democracy, the new era of capitalist reconstruction is begun. In a subsequent article, we will expose the impossibility of this reconstruction, even with the magic formulæ of MacDonaldism. Meanwhile, be it said that any plan of capitalist reconstruction will succeed only in case MacDonald and his kind succeed where Mussolini has failed, namely, in exterminating the revolutionary vanguard of the proletariat and corrupting the rest.

Versailles marked the downfall of Wilson; but London, which is the continuation of Versailles, signalised the triumph of MacDonald, the inheritor of Wilsonism. This came about because the bourgeoisie have learnt some lessons since 1919, while the pacifist illusions of Social Democracy have degenerated into veritable treachery to the proletariat and subject nationalities. The London Agreement is a revision of the Versailles Treaty—its practical rendering. The Entente bourgeoisie forged such a suicidal instrument at Versailles because, drunk with victory, they were guided by the antiquated jingoism of Clemenceau, and cynically brushed aside Wilson, their unappreciated saviour, although they did not begrudge him the frantic acclamations outside the council chamber. Five years' experience has helped the bourgeoisie to regain their business sense. To-day they have

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discovered in Wilsonism a very serviceable instrument with which to modify their suicidal policy, and thereby escape destruction. Hence the apparent success of MacDonaldism. How long will this illusion last?

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The World of Labour

		Page
Belgium:	Miners' Strike	752
France:	Socialists and the Budget	754
Germany:	The Workers against the Dawes Plan	756

BELGIUM

Miners' Strike

THE strike of the miners in the Borinage coalfield of Belgium is of particular interest as being one of the first struggles (outside Germany) against the effects of the Dawes Plan.

For the strike arose out of the demand of the coalowners for a wage cut owing to the decline in the Belgian coal market which had resulted from the accumulation of large stocks of coal during 1923 and the heavy deliveries of reparation coal.

The opening of the capitalist offensive may be traced back to February, 1924, when, after abortive negotiations over the wages cost of living sliding scale, the coalowners demanded a wage cut of 8 per cent. The trade union leaders declared themselves ready to accept the cut in stages, beginning with 5 per cent. This compromise was not acceptable to the employers.

Accordingly, on June 24, they opened the attack—in direct contravention of the wages agreement, by confronting the 2,500 miners at the Rieu-du-Cœur collieries—the poorest in the Borinage—with a 10 per cent. wage cut or closing down of the pits. The Rieu-du-Cœur miners replied by going on strike, and were promptly refused unemployment benefit.

Encouraged by this first step, the owners—again in contravention of the agreement—gave notice for a general wage reduction of 5-10 per cent., as from August 15. Against the opposition of their leaders, the miners forced the taking of a strike ballot, which, out of 12,071 voting, showed 9,347 for and 2,386 against the strike. Already 25,000 miners were out, and within a couple of days the strike was general, the whole 36,000 miners in the Borinage having come out on strike.

From the beginning the leaders of the national Miners' Union strove to localise the movement and to prevent a national strike. To this end the Social-Democratic journals, notably *Le Peuple*, the central organ of the Belgian Labour Party, and their local paper, *L'Avenir du Borinage*, occupied themselves with daily vituperation of the Belgian Communist Party and the revolutionary industrial organisation known as the "Knights of Labour" (*Chevaliers du Travail*). These bodies were agitating, both in the Borinage and the other coalfields, for the extension of the Borinage strike. On August 29 the Borinage District Committee of the Miners' Union met and issued an appeal for a national strike.

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The national Mining Joint Industrial Council (*Commission Mixte*) met at Brussels on September 9, and proposed that the wage cuts should only be from 2-3 per cent. It appeared that this proposal would be accepted, more especially as the coalowners were reported to be weakening.

By 66 votes to 25 the District Committee decided to submit the proposal to a ballot of the whole coalfield. Although the strike had already lasted five weeks, the proposal was rejected, and (on a much heavier vote) a greatly increased majority shown for continuing the strike. The figures were (of 19,643 voting) 16,962 in favour of continuing the strike, and only 2,512 against.

Meanwhile the French Left Wing (Unitary) Miners' Federation, which had all along manifested the keenest interest in the Borinage struggle, had called a conference at Douai on September 14, of delegates from the three French coalfields of the Nord, the Pas-de-Calais, and Anzin, to consider the effective organisation of measures of solidarity. It was decided, among other things, to send a delegation to the National Executive of the Belgian Miners' Union (which by formal resolution rejected the proffered aid) and to dispatch telegrams asking for assistance to Mr. A. J. Cook, for the Miners' Federation of Great Britain, and to the General Council of the Trades Union Congress.[1] These appeals remained unanswered, as did an appeal of the International Propaganda Committee of revolutionary miners, which had held a conference in Berlin, representing the miners' minority movements in a dozen European countries on September 16.

By its resolution of September 19 the miners' National Executive decided that no national ballot should be taken on the question of a national strike in support of the Borinage miners: and that solidarity should be limited to financial support. This was, of course, their attitude during the whole of the struggle.

The Borinage District Committee at first refused to accept arbitration, but, after the question had been submitted to the lodges, arbitration was accepted (September 26) by 56 votes to 25 and 4 abstentions. The Social-Democratic ex-Minister of Industry and Labour, M. Joseph Wauters, proposed as one of the arbitrators M. Cooreman, a former Clerical Prime Minister, who is known to hold a score of company directorships, including those of a number of colliery companies. Even so, the employers rejected this arbitration proposal.

The struggle, now entering on its third month, became very bitter. Blacklegs were severely treated, street lights smashed, telephone lines cut, railways torn up. The provincial governor had declared martial law and forbidden all meetings and demonstrations. Several collisions with the heavily reinforced police took place, and strikers were fired on: several were wounded, and one killed. The part played by the women is worthy of note. They were very effective in organising mass picketing and in attending to blacklegs.

The national J.I.C. had met in the meantime and had proposed a reduction of 8 per cent. instead of 10 per cent. This proposal was hastily submitted to

[1] It is understood that the M.F.G.B. at least never received this telegram. The text was published in *L'Humanité* (September 15, 1924).

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a full meeting of the Borinage District Committee on October 11 and, after a long debate, accepted by the narrow majority of 38 votes to 32, with 20 abstentions.

The formal resumption of work took place on October 15: and though a number of strikers did not immediately return, their resistance was in fact broken.

It is interesting to observe that the Borinage District Committee refrained until ten days before the end of the strike from seeking the financial assistance of the *Commission Syndicate* (the Belgian T.U.C. General Council)—and the appeal of the latter body for assistance for the strikers was issued on the day of the return to work.

The Workers' International Relief sent 50,000 francs to the strikers and organised soup kitchens. The Moscow Centrosoyus also sent £1,000 sterling. *Le Peuple* sank so low as to deny that this money was ever sent, until silenced by the production of a formal receipt.

FRANCE

Socialists and the Budget

TO vote against the Budget has been one of the cardinal principles of French Socialism ever since the Unity Congress of 1905, when the following common declaration was agreed to by all the participating Socialist organisations:—

> The (Socialist) members of Parliament form a single united group opposed to all the bourgeois political groups. The Socialist group in Parliament must refuse the Government all the means which assure the domination of the bourgeoisie and which maintain it in power; it must consequently refuse to vote the military credits, the credits for colonial conquest, the Secret Funds, and the Budget as a whole.

According to the rules of the Party it was incumbent on all Socialist deputies to vote against the Budget: and it will be recalled that, in order to carry out the Party's policy of support for the Herriot Government, it was decided by the special congress in June[1] that this rule should be temporarily abrogated, lest the Party should "play into the hands of reaction" by causing Herriot's fall.

At a National Council of the Party, held in Paris on November 1-3, the questions of support for Herriot and the Budget vote were again discussed.

On the general question of support for the Herriot Government a distinct uneasiness was exhibited by certain delegates: an uneasiness which found expression in the phrase of M. Bracke:—

> We have found that the Party has been acting only too often as if it was simply a fraction of the Liberal Party.

However, just how far the delegates of a similar outlook to M. Bracke may be classed as "Left" can be seen from the remarks of M. Lebas, who declared that:—

> A really active, reforming and audaciously democratic Government does not need to ask our assistance. They can rely on it; it is theirs every time that they wish to carry out the smallest reform.

[1] THE LABOUR MONTHLY, August, 1924, Vol. 6, No. 8, p. 508.

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In any case the general resolution on support for the Government was carried unanimously.

On the question of the Budget two resolutions were before the Council. One, proposed by the Bracke-Lebas group, in effect reiterated the decision of last June, viz., that the Budget should only be voted in order to save the Herriot Government from defeat at the hands of "reaction." A second resolution, proposed by Léon Blum, the parliamentary leader of the Party, moved to add that the Budget should be voted—

> In cases where the activity of the Party and of the Parliamentary group has introduced into the Budget a sufficient number of those essential reforms whose realisation is indeed the object of its support [of the Government].

The "Left" reproached the Right Wing with wanting to go too far with their support of Herriot: one of their speakers even gave expression to what must have been the inward fear of most of the delegates supporting the Bracke resolution, namely, that to vote for the Budget would be to play into the hands of the Communist Party. Yet even this speaker (M. Pressemane) took great care to explain that no one could question the Socialist Party's whole-hearted support of the Herriot Government.

After it had been pointed out that the refusal to pass the Blum resolution would place the Socialist President of the Financial Commission of the Chamber (M. Vincent Auriol) in a very difficult position, the extreme Right Wing M. Renaudel, wound up the debate by pointing out that the Party must have the courage of its convictions, and that what it did it must do thoroughly, carrying out the policy of support for Herriot "to the bitter end."

The Blum resolution was eventually carried by 1,130 votes to 780.

The sequel to this vote was seen in a few days when the Budget came before the Chamber. The Socialist deputies, bound by the injunction not to break the unity of the Parliamentary group (injunction specifically reiterated in the general resolution of the National Council referred to above), voted with the Government on every item of the Budget.

The "reforms"—"secured by the activity of the Party"—which enabled them to do this included some notable increases in armaments expenditure:—

(1) 313 million francs more than last year for the Navy, of which 250 million are for new constructions.
(2) 40,812,000 francs (new expenditure) on a special training scheme for reservists.
(3) 145 million francs more than last year for military aviation.
(4) 22 million francs more than last year for the purchase of artillery material.

Finally the Budget included all the usual credits for the Secret Police funds: the "reform" secured here was the proviso that all expenditure under this head should be "supervised" by the Financial Commission. The Socialist deputies sided with the Government against the Communist motion for the total abolition of the Secret Funds.

It is only necessary to refer back to the terms of the declaration of 1905.

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GERMANY

The Workers Against the Dawes Plan

ON October 2 the important Trades Council[1] of Gotha organised a conference which was attended by 103 Factory Councils of the district. This conference, after hearing numerous reports on the effects of the Dawes Plan on the situation of the German working class, adopted the following programme of ten immediate demands:—

THE "GOTHA PROGRAMME"

(1) Fight against any wage reduction. Demand an immediate increase in wages of 40 per cent. In addition fight for the pre-war rate of wages and equal wages for men and women.

(2) Fight against any prolongation of the working day. After eight hours leave the workshop. At the same time fight for the recovery of the eight-hour day though (despite the Washington Agreement) it has been set aside by the employers and the Government.

(3) Fight against the dismissal of workers and employees, and against all Civil Service reductions. Demand the absorption of the unemployed. The reinstatement of all dismissed workers, employees, and civil servants. Abolition of compulsory labour for the unemployed, increase in relief allowances for the unemployed, disabled ex-service men, and pensioners (old age, &c.) to the necessary subsistence minimum.

(4) Determined fight against all increased taxation of the workers; at the same time for the abolition of the existing taxes imposed on them. Abolition of the 10 per cent. tax on wages. Abolition of the rent tax. Abolition of taxes on co-operative societies.

(5) Free the small peasants who work their own farms from all lease charges. Every small peasant must have at least as much land as he can work with his family. Complete freedom from taxation for the small peasants. Provision of cheap fodder and manure, seed, and long term credits under the control of the small peasants themselves. Abolition of all taxation on the small peasants' co-operative societies.

(6) Assure the food supply of the industrial population by commandeering the harvest from the big agrarians (especially grain and potatoes) with the assistance of agricultural labourers' and small peasants' delegates, as well as with the support of the co-operative societies and trade unions.

(7) Fight against any attempt to force the German workers into an imperialist war: and particularly, "Hands off Soviet Russia!"

(8) Fight for the release of the political prisoners. Fight against the terrorism of White "Justice." Down with the Supreme Court![2]

(9) Fight for the repeal of all "emergency" anti-Labour legislation.

(10) The establishment of Trade Union unity to fight for these demands on a national and international scale.

This programme has given rise to the keenest discussion throughout the German working-class movement. Many factory councils and trade union organisations—especially in Central Germany—have accepted the programme and declared themselves ready to fight for the demands.

---

[1] The District Committee (*Bezirkskartell*) of the German Trade Union Federation (A.D.G.B.).

[2] The reference is to the *Staatsgerichtshof* (the Supreme Court for the Defence of the Republic), which sits at Leipzig, and whose name has become a byword for its relentless treatment of Communists and all revolutionary workers.

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As was to be expected, the Executive Committee of the Federation of Trade Unions (A.D.G.B.) has published a letter of protest, declaring that the Gotha demands are in direct contradiction to the constitution of the A.D.G.B.

The Gotha programme was accepted by a conference of delegates from all the enterprises (mines and factories) controlled by the Franco-Belgian Control Commission (the "M.I.C.U.M."), which met on October 18. A few days later the trade unions and factory councils of the important industrial town of Reimscheid, in the Ruhr, did likewise.

But the most striking success yet achieved by the Gotha programme was its acceptance by the Congress of Factory Councils of the Ruhr and Rhineland (Rhenish Westphalia) which met at Essen on November 2. This Congress, which was the result of an agitation extending over some time, was attended by nearly 600 delegates, of whom 304 were members of the "free" (Social-Democratic) trade unions.

Miners, metalworkers, and railwaymen predominated among the delegates, who included even members of the Christian Trade Unions.

In addition to declaring for the Gotha programme in its entirety, the Congress demanded the summoning of an All-German Congress of Factory Councils.

An incident, typical of thousands occurring throughout Germany at the present time, illustrates the effects of the Dawes Plan, and serves to explain the determination of the Ruhr workers, as exemplified in the Essen Congress. The great Kloeckner mining concern, wishing to enforce the eight-hour day underground and the twelve-hour day on the surface, has just dismissed 6,300 workers, including especially all shop stewards.

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Too Much Money. A Farcical Comedy in Three Acts. By Israel Zangwill. (Heinemann. 2s. 6d. paper; 3s. 6d. cloth.)

International Affairs. A Study Handbook. By Norman Angell, J. Fairgrieve, C. Delisle Burns and G. Currie Martin. (National Adult School Union. 1s.)

Russia and the Allies in the Great War. By Major-General V. Novitzky, Professor of the State Military Academy, Moscow. With a Preface by Colonel Malone. (Kniga. 1s.)

Working-class Education. By J. F. and Winifred Horrabin. (Labour Publishing Company. 2s. 6d.)

The Attempt to Smash the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union. A Report of the Actions in the Law Courts, with an Historical Introduction, and Appendix of Unpublished Documents from 1911 to 1923. (National Executive Council of the Irish Transport and General Workers' Union, Dublin. 3d.)

Labour White Papers: (1) *The Condition of the English Working Classes*, 1900-1924; (2) *The British Bondholders* (An Account of the National Debt, showing what really hinders the Labour Programme); (3) *Facts about the Combines* (A Study in Profits and Price Control); (4) *Why a Treaty with Soviet Russia?*; (5) *Who Keeps Prices High?* (Facts about Food Trusts and Other Profits). (The Labour Research Department. 1d. each.)

Lenin: The Great Strategist of the Class War. By A. Losorsky. (Trade Union Educational League. 15 cents.)

The Politics of Oil. (Studies in Labour and Capital, No. VII.) Prepared for the Labour Research Department by R. Page Arnot. (Labour Publishing Company. 2s. 6d., cloth; 1s., paper.)

Taxation and Currency. By Ernest Bilton. (Daniel, 2s. 6d.)

Evolution of Man's Destiny. By Annie Besant, B.L. (Theosophical Society. 2s.)

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INDEX

TO

VOLUME VI

JANUARY TO DECEMBER, 1924

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Index to Volume VI

January to December, 1924

I.—AUTHORS

		pages
A. E. E. R.	Fit to Burn	190–191
	Punishment and Persecution	316–319
	A Sense of Proportion	695
Arnot, R. Page	Labour Tastes Power	171–176
Atkinson, Curtis	The Melbourne Police Strike	301–305
Barbusse, Henri	Anatole France and the Revolutionary Idea	720–724
Bogdanov, A.	Religion, Art and Marxism	489–497
	The Workers' Artistic Inheritance	549–556
Braun, P.	After the Labour Party Conference	664–672
	The Labour Party's Alternative	591–601
Bromley, J.	Towards A New Policy.—VII.	421–425
Campbell, J. R.	The Campbell Case	673–677
	Left Wing Labour : Should It Cherish Illusions ?	472–480
Childe, V. G.	A Labour Premier Meets his Masters	282–285
Colyer, W. T	British Freedom	355–362
Cook, A. J.	The Crisis in the Mining Industry	226–228
	Towards A New Policy.—VI. (Trade Unionism at the Cross Roads)	337–341
Delegate, A.	After the Hull Congress	627–635
Dunstan, Dr. Robert	London and Moscow	434–437
Dutt, R. Palme	The Future of the Trades Councils Conference	87–96
	The General Election and British Foreign Policy	17–28
	Towards A New Policy—A Postscript	457–471
Fimmen, Edo	The World Situation and the Dawes Plan	619–626
Fox, R. M.	Ireland To-day	306–309
G. A. H.	Does International Capitalism exist ?	693–695
	The Unexpiated Crime	446–448
H.	History for the Worker	695–697

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

		pages
HICKS, GEORGE	Towards A New Policy.—II. (An Immediate Industrial Charter)	74–79
H. P. R.	Why Economic Science ?	315–316
HUTCHINSON, W. H.	Towards A New Policy.—I.	11–16
	Towards A New Policy—VIII. : A Reply	452–456
J. T. M.	James Connolly	380–383
LAWTHER, WILL	Towards A New Policy—III.	166–170
LENIN, N. (V. I.)	English Pacifism and English Aversion to Theory	612–618
	On the Road to Insurrection—I. and II.	678–688
	On the Road to Insurrection—III.	732–739
	Ramsay MacDonald and The Third International	140–157
MAHON, J. L.	The Limits of Labour Policy	114–119
MALMSTEN, KARL	*See* STROM, FREDRIK	
MARX, KARL	Robert Applegarth	503–504
NEARING, SCOTT	The Black Lands	236–237
	The Imperial Struggle for Canada	286–292
NEWBOLD, J. T. WALTON	Economic Power Shifts to Transport	229–235
	The Gates of the Ruhr	363–368
	Ireland and the Illusion of MacDonaldism	544–548
POLLITT, HARRY	The Trades Union Congress	525–534
PRICE, M. PHILIPS	The Labour Party and Power I.—Some Continental Comparisons	80–86
	II.—Possible Achievements and Certain Difficulties at Home	238–242
	III.—The Outlook Abroad	276–281
	IV.—What should be the Attitude of the Left Wing ?	426–433
	Lenin	158–165
	Will the Experts' Report Settle Europe ?	329–336
PURCELL, A. A.	Towards A New Policy—V.	268–270
RADEK, KARL	The Stability of Capitalism, or the Unstable Communists	725–731
RATHBONE, H. P.	The Sudan "Scandal"	481–498
	Whose Budget ?	342–354
READE, ARTHUR E. E.	Idealism *versus* History	369–375
ROEBUCK, C. M.	The Workers and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty	602–611
ROSMER, A.	British Imperialism and French Imperialism after the London Conference	535–543

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

		pages
ROY, EVELYN	The Revolution in Central Asia : The Struggle for Power in Holy Bokhara—I.	403–410
	The Struggle for Power in Holy Bokhara—II.	557–565
	Some Facts About the Bombay Strike	293–300
ROY, MANABENDRA NATH	India and the British Labour Government	200–210
	The New Trend of Indian Nationalism	97–105
	Reconstructing Europe	740–751
R. P. A.	The Bourgeoisie Look at Themselves	127–128
	Oil and World Politics	188–190
R. P. D.	A Good Textbook	59–60
SCHUTZ, GEZA	Stabilisation	498–502
S. K.	The Class Struggle in Germany	106–113
STROM, FREDRIK, AND MALMSTEN, KARL	The Labour Movement in Sweden—I.	46–52
T. H. W.	Bowing to the Inevitable	383–384
	The Great Man	60–62
	Some of the Enemy's Weapons	253–254
T. L.	The French Press and Tsarist Russia	36–45
TROTZKY, L.	H. G. Wells and Lenin—the Philistine Discourseth on the Revolutionary	411–420
	Is it Possible to Fix a Definite Time for a Revolution or a Counter-Revolution ?	29–35
WILLIAMS, ROBERT	Towards A New Policy—IV.	211–215
WINTRINGHAM, T. H.	The Budget of Illusion	216–225
W. M. H.	ANew Chapter in the World Revolution	124–127
ZINOVIEV, G.	Lenin and the Workers	271–275

II.—SUBJECTS

ASIA	The Revolution in Central Asia—The Struggle for Power in Holy Bokhara—I.	403–410
	The Revolution in Central Asia—the Struggle for Power in Holy Bokhara—II.	557–565
AUSTRALIA	A Labour Premier meets his Masters	282–285
	The Melbourne Police Strike	301–305
AUSTRIA	Stabilisation	498–502

PRODUCED 2005 BY UNZ.ORG
ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

		pages
BALKANS, THE	Socialist Conference	310–311
BELGIUM	Trade Union Campaign Against Communists	566–567
BOOK REVIEWS	59–62; 124–128; 188–191; 253–254; 315–319; 380–384; 446–448; 693–697	
BRITAIN	After the Hull Congress	627–635
	British Freedom	355–362
	Budget of Illusion	216–225
	Crisis in the Mining Industry	226–228
	English Pacifism and English Aversion to Theory	612–618
	Future of the Trades Councils Conference	87–96
	General Election and British Foreign Policy	17–28
	Labour Party's Alternative	591–601
	Trades Union Congress	525–534
BULGARIA	Communist Party and the Peasantry	55–56
CANADA	Imperial Struggle for Canada	286–292
CORRESPONDENCE	Between the Editor and the Printer of THE LABOUR MONTHLY	243–246
	Sir Leo Chiozza Money and T. H. W.	376
DAWES REPORT	British Imperialism and French Imperialism after the London Conference	535–543
	The Issue in Europe	323–328
	A Second Versailles	515–524
	Will the Experts' Report Settle Europe?	329–336
	World Situation and the Dawes Plan	619–626
	The Stability of Capitalism, or the Unstable Communist	725–731
FAR EAST	Pacific Transport Workers' Conference	639–640
FRANCE	Communist Congress	184–186
	Elections and Socialist-Liberal Collaboration	506–509
	The Press and Tsarist Russia	36–45
	Socialist Congress	186–187
GERMANY	Class Struggle in Germany	106–113
	Communist International on the Situation	247–252
	Communist Party after the Frankfurt Congress	438–442
	Crisis in Trade Unionism	182–184

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

		pages
GERMANY (*contd.*)	Dictatorship, the Communist Party and the Working Class	57–58
	Factory Councils Elections	313–314
	Metal Workers' Congress	312–313
	A New Chapter in the World Revolution	124–127
	Opposition in the Trade Unions	311–312
	Reichstag Elections	377–379
	Social Democratic Congress	505–506
INDIA	India and the British Labour Government	200–210
	New Trend of Indian Nationalism	97–105
	Some Facts about the Bombay Strike	293–300
INTERNATIONAL	Anatole France	720–724
	Balkans Socialist Conference	310–311
	Building Workers' Congress	691
	The Communist International: Report of Fifth World Congress	567–574
	Communist International on the German Situation	247–252
	Does International Capitalism Exist?	693–695
	International Federation of Trades Unions: Vienna Congress	575–576
	Labour and Socialist International: Executive Meeting	443–445
	Metal Workers' Congress	691
	Miners' Congress	691–692
	Oil and World Politics	188–190
	Pacific Transport Workers' Congress	639–640
	Ramsay MacDonald and the Third International	140–157
	Red International of Labour Unions	574
	Textile Workers' Congress	692
	Transport Workers' Congress	689–691
IRELAND	Ireland and the Illusion of MacDonaldism	544–548
	Ireland To-Day	306–309
	James Connolly	380–383
ITALY	Working Class and the Elections	445
LABOUR GOVERNMENT	The Labour Party and Power: I.—Some Continental Comparisons	80–86
	II.—Possible Achievements and Certain Difficulties at Home	238–242
	III.—The Outlook Abroad	276–281

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		pages
LABOUR GOVERNMENT (*contd.*)	IV.—What Should be the Attitude of the Left Wing?	426–433
	A Reply: Left Wing Labour: Should It Cherish Illusions?	472–480
	The "Left Wing"	579–590
	After the Labour Party Conference	664–672
	The Campbell Case	673–677
	India and the British Labour Government	200–210
	Ireland and the Illusion of MacDonaldism	544–548
	A Labour Government	3–10
	Labour in Chains	387–402
	Labour Party's Alternative	591–601
	Labour Tastes Power	171–176
	Limits of Labour Policy	114–119
	London and Moscow	434–437
	MacDonaldism	259–267
	Rail Strike	67–73
	A Revolutionary Election	643–663
	Whose Budget?	342–354
	Workers and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty	602–611
LENIN	Lenin	158–165
	Lenin and the Workers	271–275
	Leninism	131–139
	H. G. Wells and Lenin	411–420
MACDONALD, RAMSAY	The Great Man	60–62
	Ireland and the Illusion of MacDonaldism	544–548
	The Labour Party's Alternative	591–601
	MacDonaldism	259–267
	Ramsay MacDonald and the Third International	140–157
NOTES OF THE MONTH		3–10; 67–73; 131–139; 195–199; 259–267; 323–328; 387–402; 515–524; 579–590; 643–663; 707–719
POLAND	Strike Movements	53–55
RUSSIA	Discussions in the Communist Party	120–123
	The Discussion in the Russian Communist Party	177–181
	The Unexpiated Crime	446–448
	Workers and the Anglo-Soviet Treaty	602–611
SUDAN	The Sudan "Scandal"	481–488
SWEDEN	The Labour Movement	46–52

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ELECTRONIC REPRODUCTION PROHIBITED

		pages
TOWARDS A NEW POLICY	I.	11–16
	II.—An Immediate Industrial Charter	74–79
	III.	166–170
	IV.	211–215
	V.	268–270
	VI.—Trade Unionism at the Cross Roads	337–341
	VII.	421–425
	VIII.—A Reply	452–456
	A Postscript	457–471
UNITED STATES OF AMERICA	The Black Lands	236–237
	Labour Movement and the Presidential Elections	636–638
	Position of the Socialist Party	638–639
WORLD OF LABOUR	53–58; 120–123; 182–187; 247–252; 310–316; 377–379; 443–445; 505–509; 566–576; 636–640; 689–692; 752–757	

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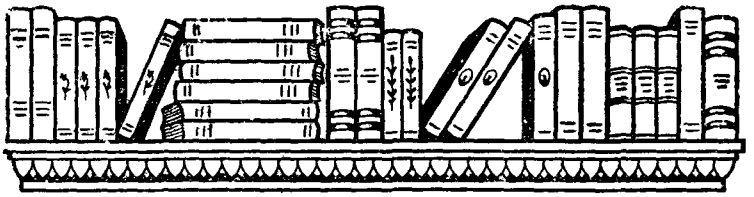

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